

The
HIGHEST SERVICE

By WILLIAM E. DOUGHTY

DEVOTIONAL
SERIES

INTERCHURCH WORLD MOVEMENT
OF NORTH AMERICA

III FIFTH AVENUE

NEW YORK CITY

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Being one of a series of devotional
pamphlets designed to cultivate the
spiritual resources of the church.

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THE WORD service has taken on new meanings in this age of power. Skill and strength are in great demand. Many inspiring avenues of service to the community, the nation, and the world are open to Christian leadership. Among them all not one reaches so far, not one releases such influence, not one so changes the direction and spirit of all other lines of activity as does a prayer life of great reality.

THE OPEN SECRET

PRAYER is keeping company with Christ. Prayer dies without constant fellowship with him. Prayer is no cheap thing. The power prayer brings cannot be had for the mere asking. It expands with a more perfect understanding of Christ, with yielding to his call. It deepens with burden bearing. It widens with lifting. It strengthens with the vision of the kingdom. Prayer is an eye horizoned only by the total program of Christ. Ignorance of prayer is an unspeakable misfortune. Prayerlessness is death.

To master the secrets of prayer there must be absolute surrender and complete uncovering of the heart to Christ. Surrender is both an

act and an attitude. The act is abandon to God, the attitude is obedience and abiding. The act is the first thing, the attitude is perpetual. The first is an exercise of will plus an attitude of love.

There is nothing like prayer over the open Book to uncover the heart and bring one to abandonment. The uplifted eye and the open Book create an atmosphere in which it is easy to release one's life for service. After that the need of fresh overflowings of passion and purpose, of deeper obedience and more unbroken peace is constant. Prayer satisfies this need.

A WORLD MOVEMENT

GOD HAS often revealed his world purpose to men unpromising. John Stewart was an uncultured and drunken negro. To human eyes he was the last person in the world to begin a great movement for the advancement of the kingdom of God. He was converted after one of his debauches. He united with the church. He began at once to live the life of prayer. He had a habit of retiring to the fields or forest to pray. During one of these seasons he was deeply impressed with his duty to carry the gospel to the despised and neglected Indians. He tried to evade the call. It grew each prayer season more imperative and more insistent.

He yielded at last, and in spite of limitations, the protest of his friends, and great difficulties,

he did a notable work among the Wyandottes. With remarkable zeal he appealed to the chiefs. He urged them to believe it was the will of God that men go to all nations and preach to all people. An appeal for help was sent out. The Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized, and now works over all the continents and many islands of the world. To inaugurate great movements and to change the currents of human history, God sometimes uses humble men. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." But we have it.

PRAYER EMPOWERS MEN

THERE are men of prayer. They are men of power. Prayer was a consuming passion in the life of George H. C. McGregor, who sent out seven missionaries from his own church and was planning to win another seven when he was cut down by death. It was he who said, "I would rather train one man to pray than ten men to preach." Such pastors cannot fail to make their congregations grapple with the supreme spiritual realities.

LEADERS FAR AFIELD

DAVID LIVINGSTONE penetrated into the secrets of the Dark Continent, and then died, as he had lived, upon his knees.

When the body of Horace Tracy Pitkin was found after the fury of the Boxer attack, his hands were clasped in prayer.

Self-sacrificing devotion to Christ creates pioneers like Verbeck of Japan, of whom the Japanese themselves said, "This benefactor, teacher, and friend of Japan prayed for the welfare of the empire to the last."

When Judson finished his Burmese Bible, taking the last sheet in his hand, on his knees in prayer he dedicated it to God.

As James Gilmour, the martyr missionary crossed the frontier into Mongolia and caught sight of the first hut, he kneeled and gave thanks to God for a redeemed Mongolia.

MEN OF MIGHT AT HOME

JASON LEE's diary is saturated with prayer. Out in the Oregon country he wrote: "My Father in heaven, I give myself to thee. O may I ever be wholly thine, always guided by thine unerring counsel."

Sheldon Jackson, with an eye on the far horizon, had the spirit of the explorer. One of the most moving anecdotes in his biography is the story of an epoch-making prayer meeting on the Missouri River at Sioux City, where, with two other men, he looked out over the three great states centering there—Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota—and claimed them for the empire of Christ.

Who can read of the prayer life of such soldiers as Chinese Gordon, or Armstrong, or

Stonewall Jackson, without hearing the call to intercession?

This spirit distinguishes philanthropists like George Mueller, who secured through prayer seven million dollars for the care of his orphans. His was an exceptional case only because it was marked by an exceptional amount and reality of prayer.

Henry Clay Trumbull talked to God as a friend in the flesh about every problem in the upbuilding of the *Sunday School Times*.

There have been reformers, too, like Wilberforce praying and fighting, until at three o'clock in the morning Parliament passed a bill amending the charter of the East India Company so as to admit missionaries into India. Then he said, "I am persuaded that we have laid the foundation stone of the grandest edifice that ever was raised in Asia."

All Sunday School workers should know, of course, of Harriet Lathrop, whose story is told in "Old Time Student Volunteers." Her devotion to Jesus Christ led her to organize a Sunday school in the face of great opposition. She so lived and taught in the power of the Spirit that she not only went out herself as a missionary, but three sisters followed her; one brother became a home missionary; another went into the ministry; and her daughter became the wife of a home missionary.

THE FIRE THAT NEVER GOES OUT

NATHANIEL COBB of Boston, a business man, had a prayer room in his store.

Henry Martin wrote, "I lay in tears interceding for the unfortunate natives of this country."

Neesima advanced on his knees.

Pandita Ramabai with 1600 women and girls depending on her replied to one who inquired what she should ask from the people of America, "Prayer! Give me prayer and I'll have all."

When in his last illness the head of an eastern college was told that he was about to die, he replied, "Is that so? Then lift me from the bed and place me on my knees and let my last act be a prayer to God for the salvation of the world."

Hidden workers, too, there are who are mighty "helpers together by prayer." Dr. G. Campbell Morgan dedicates his book on "The Practise of Prayer" to one of these: "To Marianna Adlard, one of the hidden workers who endure as seeing Him who is invisible and who in secret labor by intercession with those who preach the Word."

THE GREATEST OF THEM ALL

WHEN we have been inspired by these and a multitude more "whom no man can num-

ber," we come at last to look at Christ and let these words of his once more search us through and through: "And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose up and went out and departed into a desert place, and there prayed." "And it came to pass in those days that he went out into a mountain to pray and he continued all night in prayer to God."

We dare not forget also that He promised his followers that through prayer "Greater things than these shall ye do." His call is to the highest, most glorious service that can be offered man.

THE VOICE OF GOD

WE DO well, however, to remind ourselves of what Andrew Murray said: "To break through old habits, to resist the clamor of pressing duties that have always had their way, to make every other call subordinate to this one, whether others approve or not, will not be easy."

Our age needs this. Its life must be saturated with the spirit of intercession. There must be a rediscovery of prayer power. There must be a new dedication to the practise of prayer until our whole high, intense life is subdued, quieted, fused, with the holy fire of a new devotion to Christ. This is God's supreme call to us. Will we heed the call? Now?

